

**REMARKS**

The Office Action mailed on February 27, 2004, has been reviewed and the comments of the Patent and Trademark Office have been considered. Prior to this paper, claims 1-28 were pending in the present application, with claims 4-9, 11 and 25-26 being withdrawn from consideration. By this paper, Applicants amend claims 1, 19, 20, 23, 24, 27 and 28. Support for the amendments to these claims may be found, among other places, at the paragraph spanning pages 1-2, at lines 5-6 and 20-25 on page 2, at lines 10-13 and 24-25 on page 3, at lines 5-11 on page 6, lines 1-10 on page 7, and at the paragraph spanning pages 8-9.

Also by this paper, Applicants add new claims 29-33. Support for these claims may be found, among other places, in Figs. 4-10 and lines 10-13 of page 3. Therefore, claims 1-33 are now pending in the present application.

Applicants believe that the present application is now in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

**Interview of April 22, 2004**

Applicants thank Examiner Foreman for extending the courtesy of an in-person interview to Applicants' representatives on April 22, 2004, where the above claim amendments and new claims were discussed, and it was agreed that claims having such recitations would appear to overcome the prior art of record.

Applicants submit that the Interview Summary (a copy of which is attached) provides a complete and proper recordation of the substance of the interview, per MPEP §713.04.

**Reference Characters**

Reference characters have been retained in the claims but have no effect on the claim scope per MPEP § 608.01(m).

**Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)**

In the Office Action, claims 1-3, 10, 12, 17-21, 23, 24 and 27-28 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Akerfeldt (USP 5,938,624) in view of Lafontaine (USP 5,501,228), and claims 14-16 and 22 were rejected under the same statute in view of the just mentioned references when combined with Wallace (USP 6,371,972).

In order to advance prosecution, Applicants have amended the claims as seen above, and respectfully submit that these claims are allowable for at least the reason that the cited references, even after combination, do not teach or suggest each and every recitation of the claims, especially the recitations added to the claims by this amendment. As was recognized in the interview of April 22, 2004, the cited references not disclose a male connector with a core wire that is stiffer than a section of a guide wire core that substantially extends through a guide wire substantially from a distal end of the guide wire substantially to a proximal end of the guide wire. Allowance of the claims is respectfully requested.

**Withdrawn Claims**

Claims 4-9, 11 and 25-26 were withdrawn in a prior Office Action. Applicants note that these claims depend from either claim 1 or claim 24. Applicants respectfully request that the PTO rejoin and reconsider claims 4-9, 11 and 25-26 due to their dependency from claims 1 or 24, claims that is allowable.

**New Claims**

As seen above, new claims 28-33 have been added. These claims are allowable for at least the reason that they depend from allowable claims, and for the additional reason that none of the cited references, alone or in combination, teach or suggest a male connector with a core wire that has a larger outer circumference when taken normal to a longitudinal direction of extension of the core wire than an outer circumference of the guide wire core when taken normal to a longitudinal direction of extension of the guide wire core.

**Conclusion**

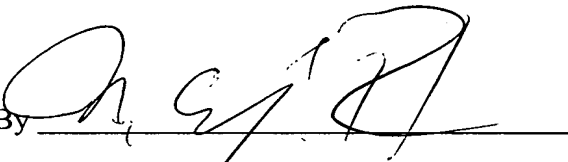
The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a check being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicant hereby petitions for such extension under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 and authorizes payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 19-0741.

Examiner Foreman is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

Respectfully submitted,

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